

STATE OF THE CITY – 2012

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen – I would like to thank all of you for taking time from your busy schedules to come today.

I would like to welcome Representative Ryan Quarles, Senator Damon Thayer, Judge George Lusby and Wil James of Toyota. I also want to welcome our Scott County Magistrates and Members of the Georgetown City Council.

I would also like to take a minute and thank the members of my management team, City Clerk Hoffman's Office and all of our support staff for the excellent job they do every day. In my opinion I have put together the best team in the history of the city. These are well –run departments and are made up of the hardest workers in the city.
I am very prejudiced!!

And a special thanks to my family- their support and strength is invaluable to me.

The issues I am going to discuss today are important to your future, and the future of our community.

When I first started thinking about this information I decided I wanted to use one word to describe the State of Our City and then proceed from there.

It would be nice if I could use such terms as Wonderful... .or Strong... .or Secure... but in all honesty, I can't use those words to describe the City of Georgetown today.

The more I thought about it, the more one particular word kept coming to mind... .PRECARIOUS

If you look up precarious in Webster's Dictionary you will find various definitions including: dependent upon chance; risky; dependent upon mere assumption; and unwarranted

Unfortunately, precarious best describes the state of Georgetown today.

One year ago when I stood before you and gave the 2011 State of the City address, I described our situation as CHALLENGING.

But at that time I also said I was extremely HOPEFUL because I felt the newly elected city council and I had a shared vision for the future of our community.

When I was campaigning for Mayor I consistently discussed the programs and facilities that I thought were important for our city. I never strayed from that message.

My top priority in every speech I gave was the construction of a police station.

I discussed the need to provide adequate personnel in ALL departments so we could provide the services our citizens DESERVED AND EXPECTED.

I talked about making the capital investments that were necessary to maintain and improve our infrastructure and our quality of life.

I was consistent in discussing all of these issues, and quite honestly, my message was well received by the citizens of this community.

Based on my message, and the voter's endorsement, I really thought I would get support from the city council in funding these initiatives. That is why I said last year that I was hopeful.

Unfortunately, one year later, I must admit that I have not received the support I expected, and the goals I had hoped to achieve, have not been met. I'm talking financial support- everything else is fine.

Now, let me be the first to say that I knew then, and I know now, that the economies of our city and our country are struggling.

Based on that reality a lot of people were telling me last year that I had to run the city like a business... cut expenses and live on less.

Well, that philosophy may be fine in the business world where you can reduce staff and production if demand decreases (Law of Supply & Demand).

BUT, government doesn't produce and sell –government is in the business of PROVIDING SERVICES, and the need for those services in most cases, does not drop just because the economy is struggling. We try to maintain our level of services even though the population continues to grow and our workforce doesn't.

Let me give you an example – awhile back there was an article in the local newspaper describing how busy the police department had been on a particular Friday.

The newspaper noted that while our police department normally answers around 70 calls per day (actually we answer an average of 77 calls per day), there had been 107 calls for assistance on that Friday.(4.5 calls per hour).

Think that over for just a second – 107 calls on a single day. That's a lot of calls... BUT, when you consider how few police officers the city actually employs to protect our city, it is a HUGE number of calls.

Let me give you some facts about police protection to consider:

First, the city has a population of 29,800 people according to the 2010 census

Second, the police department employs a total of 49 officers, if you include the command staff and 8 officers currently in training. This results in a total of 39 officers currently available to be on patrol in the city in 3 shifts.

Thirdly, in spite of the economic conditions, Georgetown has continued to grow. Today, the city covers 13.7 square miles. So we have a much larger area to cover

And fourth, and the factor that concerns me the most, based on the number of police officers we employ, the normal number of officers on patrol at any one time is between 4 and 6 officers.

Now think that over a minute... the normal number of officers on duty is between 4 and 6... and our number of calls is increasing every day... Ask yourself this question... DO YOU REALLY THINK WE HAVE ADEQUATE POLICE PROTECTION?

In 2011 we had 28,293 calls for assistance to the police department, which was up from 26,231 in 2010. TWO THOUSAND Extra calls.

Based on recommendations from the FBI and the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the city should have 2.5 police officers for every 1,000 residents. Using that standard Georgetown should have a police force of at least 74 officers!

And I'm not beating on the police department. They do an incredible job, but it would be ridiculous not to acknowledge they are understaffed... and they are also underpaid! Have you noticed how young our officers are? Some haven't been shaving very long. We have lost a lot of experienced officers because of low pay and benefits. Do I blame officers for leaving? NO. They work to advance and have more take-home pay for their families. I would recommend them to work elsewhere if they asked me.

And it's not just the police department.

Perhaps the only department we now have that is fully staffed is the fire department, and during the budget process some members of the council wanted to reduce our number of firefighters instead of trying to fully staff our other departments.

The one and only reason for this proposal was to try to save money. Fortunately, the council realized the city had to put safety first and did not reduce the staff.

I noted also last year the city had 2 fire trucks that need to be replaced and that our community was growing by leaps and bounds. However, in the interest of safety I strongly felt we should maintain the staffing level of the fire department, and at the same time, try to find additional revenues to meet the capital needs of the department.

I did not see these choices as mutually exclusive then, and I do not see them as being mutually exclusive today. Our community's safety depends on this.

Therefore, my biggest concern during the budget process last year was the city's failure to adequately fund ALL necessary city services.

I am not trying to be an alarmist... but I think it is important for the residents of Georgetown to know the real impact of failing to adequately fund our city services.

I honestly feel that failing to fund these services puts our city at risk and compromises our quality of life.

In my opinion, it is not okay to ignore these needs!

The city government exists for one reason... to provide services. And I don't think the city council and I are doing our jobs, if we don't find a way to do this! This is the reason we were voted into office.

FOR EXAMPLE, IT IS NOT OKAY TO IGNORE OUR DESPERATE NEED FOR A CENTRALIZED POLICE DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS

This was my top campaign priority and we're no closer to having a new centralized police headquarters today than we were 5 years ago. I am thoroughly convinced that some of the problems we see in the police department will never be solved until we have a centralized command headquarters. It is tough for anyone to try to oversee 2 different locations.

IT IS ALSO NOT OKAY FOR 2/3 OF OUR POLICE OFFICERS TO BE DRIVING VEHICLES THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN REPLACED YEARS AGO.

We have 49 officers and while 12 vehicles have been replaced in the past 2 years, no other new vehicles have been replaced in 5 years! This has the potential to endanger officers' lives and it compromises their ability to respond to calls.

REGARDING THE FIRE DEPARTMENT AND EMS SERVICES, IT IS NOT OKAY TO IGNORE THE CAPITAL EQUIPMENT NEEDS OF OUR FIRST RESPONDERS

The need for new fire trucks and ambulances is real, and those needs don't go away just because funding is not provided in the city budget.

LOOK AT the BASIC SERVICES the city provides. IT IS NOT OKAY TO CONTINUALLY IGNORE NEEDED INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS LIKE OUR BRIDGES AND STORMWATER SYSTEM

While some of our citizens cringe at a forecast of rain because their basements may get flooded from storm water backup, the city budget provides no money to make these improvements.

LIKEWISE, IT IS NOT OKAY TO IGNORE THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND MAINTENANCE NEEDS OF OUR PARKS

The Parks Department has not received any money in its capital budget for 5 years. The failure of the city council to address these needs has resulted in the youth softball and baseball programs being forced to pay to build restrooms in public parks!

Think that over a minute... our youth programs are being forced to take over the financial responsibilities of the city because the city does not provide for these needs in the budget process... TO ME - THAT IS HORRIBLE PUBLIC POLICY!

GIVEN ITS IMPACT ON CITY EMPLOYEES TO EFFICIENTLY PERFORM THEIR JOBS, IT IS NOT OKAY FOR THE CITY TO ALLOW ITS TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE TO BECOME ANTIQUATED.

The effective life of technology these days is around 2 – 3 years, and the city is operating with systems that are much, much older than that.

AND LAST, BUT CERTAINLY NOT LEAST, IT IS NOT OKAY TO CONTINUALLY IGNORE THE FINANCIAL NEEDS OF CITY EMPLOYEES

In the past 5 years the (CPI) Consumer Price Index has gone up almost 11% and our employees, other than a small \$300 increase in 2010, have received nothing. At the same time, they have had to assume paying a larger portion of their insurance costs. You don't need to acknowledge this, but how many workers, other than city workers, in this audience have not had a raise in 5 years? How many employers have failed to give a raise in the last 5 years? And have you had to take on extra duties during those five years in which you didn't get a raise? City employees have.

WE EXPECT THE BEST SERVICES from our employees, BUT IN DEVELOPING OUR BUDGET it appears that we don't want to pay them accordingly. THE CITY is not considering the fact that OUR EMPLOYEES ARE LOSING PURCHASING POWER EVERY YEAR. They take the same amount home, but it buys less.

THE POLICY OF EXPECTING MORE FROM EMPLOYEES WHILE NOT PAYING THEM MORE IS COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE AND THE CITY NEEDS TO ADDRESS THAT PROBLEM IN THE UPCOMING BUDGET.

And the list goes on and on:

We have not invested a dime to create a one-stop shop to simplify our development and to attract investment; we are now working with the County to accomplish this and that is GOOD!

The city's pension costs are likely to increase another \$100,000 this year for both hazardous and non-hazardous employees;

Now, if you would, in the face of all these needs, let me explain my approach to meeting these needs.

Last year, after closely examining the needs of the city, I knew Georgetown could not provide the services that were needed with our existing revenues.

For the previous 4 years the city had operated with a structural imbalance in its budget, but instead of addressing the imbalance, the city chose to once again ignore revenue needs and use some of what little reserve funds we had left in order to balance the budget.

While this may make sense for a year or two, it makes no sense for this to be the city's long-term financial strategy. IT WON'T WORK!!

So last year, in consideration of the concerns that were expressed to me from various segments of our community, I provided the city council with 2 different approaches to the city budget.

One approach addressed the budget deficit head-on by proposing an increase in the occupational license fee which would have covered our financial needs, while the other approach, which I called a bone marrow budget, ignored the problems for another year.

When I submitted those budgets to the council, my worst expectation was that the council would choose the "bone marrow" budget, and continue to get by on the same revenues we had the prior year.

Unfortunately, the council, in my opinion, chose an even worse alternative. Not only did they choose the “bone marrow” budget, but they actually voted to reduce city revenues by \$750,000 by allowing the insurance premium tax rate to drop from 7% to 5%. I have asked the Council to put that 2% back in the budget at our last Council Meeting.

So, even though the council knew the city was going to have a deficit in excess of \$1 million, they chose to reduce the revenues available to the city.

The result of these decisions was a FY 2012 budget which was theoretically balanced by using \$1.3 million from our reserve fund. They were hoping the revenues would increase enough to cover deficit.

Think back for just a second to the definition of precarious... .DEPENDENT ON MERE ASSUMPTION

The FY 2012 budget has proven to be just that – but, instead of needing \$1.3 million of our reserve funds to balance the budget, it now appears we will need closer to \$1.75 million in reserve funds to balance the budget.

This situation is totally unacceptable, and it cannot be allowed to continue.

Therefore, this year I am determined to accomplish two things regarding the city budget:

FIRST – I WILL MAKE SURE THAT FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS WHICH IMPACT THE SAFETY AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN THIS COMMUNITY ARE ADEQUATELY PROVIDED FOR IN THE BUDGET!

SECOND – I WILL NOT SUBMIT ANOTHER DEFICIT BUDGET TO THE CITY COUNCIL.

I WILL PROPOSE A BUDGET THAT PROVIDES ADEQUATE REVENUES TO BALANCE THIS BUDGET.

I WILL NOT GO ANOTHER YEAR WITHOUT AT LEAST TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH THESE THINGS.

I AM A MAN OF MY WORD AND I INTEND to KEEP MY WORD.

SO TODAY, I WOULD LIKE TO DELIVER A MESSAGE TO OUR COMMUNITY.

TO THE FIRST RESPONDERS WHO ARE CONSTANTLY CONCERNED ABOUT INADEQUATE STAFFING AND AGING EQUIPMENT;

TO ALL THE PARENTS WHO'S CHILDREN ARE INVOLVED IN PROGRAMS THAT USE PUBLIC PARKS;

TO ALL THE WORKERS WHO HAVE SEEN YOUR PURCHASING POWER DWINDLE WHILE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES HAVE INCREASED; AND

TO THE BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRIES WHO DEPEND ON PUBLIC SERVICES TO ENSURE YOUR SUCCESS;

I PROMISE that I will do everything to see that these concerns are addressed!!

AND IF IT MEANS RAISING ADDITIONAL REVENUES TO PROVIDE THESE SERVICES... .SO BE IT! I WILL ASK FOR IT!

IF THESE PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES ARE NOT PROVIDED FOR IN NEXT YEAR'S BUDGET, IT WILL NOT BE BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT INCLUDED IN THE BUDGET I SUBMIT TO THE CITY COUNCIL.

You know, Georgetown is a mayor-council form of government, and it is the mayor's responsibility to develop a budget that meets the needs of the city. The Council is responsible for providing the revenues needed to fund these needs.

This cannot be done without leadership from the Mayor and cooperation from the Council.

It is not leadership to ignore problems.

It is not leadership to stand back and watch while the needs of the community are put on the back burner in the budget process. Therefore, I intend to again strongly support my proposals when they are discussed by the city council.

I have also come to the conclusion that it is not leadership to stand by and watch effective relationships that have served our community well for decades, be allowed to disappear.

Let me dwell on this for a moment.

One of my proudest accomplishments when I served my first two terms as mayor of Georgetown was to establish a working agreement with the County government that served city AND county residents well.

Recently, however, these agreements are being put under the microscope, and I am worried about what the outcome could potentially be. I have not spoken out on this issue – at a couple of meetings we have had, I just listen with an open mind.

The most prominent of these agreements currently being investigated is EMS. It is the position of our council members, that the city could save money and improve the quality of services by ending the relationship with the county and providing a City based EMS service through the city fire department. They have asked our Fire Chief to conduct this investigation.

The city council and I would not be meeting our responsibilities in these tough times if we did not at least investigate to determine whether there are cost savings and service improvements that can be made.

However, it occurs to me, that perhaps it would be more productive to approach this from a little different perspective.

Instead of operating on a premise that we cannot continue to operate these services under an agreement that is 20 years old, as some have suggested, why don't we approach the issue from the perspective of "what can we do to improve services and cost allocation within the existing agreement that we are presently working under?"

Let me first say that I am proud of my fire chief, Robert Bruin, for being proactive in helping our city find ways to save money and maintain our level of service. He is experienced, knowledgeable and very dedicated to this community.

In my opinion, however, before the city decides to actually provide EMS services by itself, I think it would be appropriate to determine if the improvements that are recommended can be done through the existing inter-local agreement.

For example, it has been suggested that the city could improve response times by locating ambulances at more than one location. If that is true, what would prevent us from locating ambulances in more than one location now? That would improve both our coverage and our response time.

Another issue that has been discussed is the "run rate", or reimbursement the EMS gets for each run they make. It has been suggested that this rate could be substantially higher if county collections were improved.

This is a concern to the city simply because the budget deficit for the department is split by the city and the county. The more they collect, the less we have to pay. Our share is now approximately \$850,000.00.

If this is true... why can't the collection rate be improved under the existing agreement? We are simply trying to cut expenses.

But before the city decides to scrap our agreement with the county I think we must determine if these improvements can be made under the existing agreement. We will begin our EMS discussion at 5 o'clock this evening at City Hall.

And I would hope that this attitude can extend to all the services that are provided jointly by the city and the county.

That is my input about the EMS situation and the remaining inter-local agreements that we have.

I realize that some of the things I've said today may be controversial, but I hope my comments will at least make you think.

Government exists to provide services, and these services cost money. More importantly, there is a real cost, and a real danger, if government does not provide these services to our community.

Thank you for your time and I would extend an invitation to all of you to stop in my office or give me a call if you would like to discuss any of my comments.

Now get back to your jobs and have a great day!!